

**Strand Theatre Task Force
Community Meeting
June 1, 2004, 6:30 – 8:30pm**

Community Meeting Information Summary

1. Introduction

This document presents a summary of the community/key stakeholder input information on the Strand Theatre collected during the Community Meeting hosted by the Mayor's Task Force on the Future of the Strand Theatre on June 1, 2004, 6:30-8:30pm at the New Boston Middle School. The Strand Theatre Task Force will utilize the following information (and the information gathered via the community focus groups held throughout April, May, and June) as input into the Strand Theatre vision development process.

2. Themes

The following themes represent a summary of the input and suggestions shared by community meeting participants.

Theme 1: Programming Options

Participants offered a wealth of ideas for the Strand's future programming. Common themes in the programming area are summarized below:

- Vibrant performing arts center, a community art hub; a place to celebrate art – a place where art is not snobby, it is about people, about youth learning, about community art
- Youth and education focused
- Affordable programming for: 1) community arts groups to perform/use and 2) community residents to attend
- Diverse programming
- Professional and quality arts programming
- High utilization: use 365 days/year during the day and at night; variety of uses are possible – from big productions at night to hosting community groups during the day
- Other programming options
 - Use the Brooklyn Academy as model for the Strand
 - Host a dance and/or a theater company
 - Invite/host inspirational speakers
 - Host public office debates/political events

Theme 2: Community Involvement is Key

Meeting participants agreed that community involvement is a key aspect of their vision for the Strand. They shared the following ideas to insure community participation:

- Maintain affordable prices to build a regular base of attendees; consider implementing a subscription base as a source of funding
- Diverse programming appealing to the diverse communities surrounding the Strand
- A place for youth
- A source of jobs for local residents
- Good relationship between the community and the management

- Friends of Strand/Advisory Group – consider creating a body of community residents to serve in an advisory and/or marketing role

Theme 3: Need for Marketing

Meeting participants believed that marketing/visibility campaign will be important in reviving the Strand and ensuring its long-term viability. Specific suggestions included:

- Market the Strand as unique and different from other theaters/venues in the city
- The Strand does not have a good image (“good things do not happen at the Strand,” not always producer-friendly, safety and transportation issues in the area): a marketing campaign should address these concerns
- Other ideas
 - Use public access television for marketing purposes
 - Link the Strand’s website to the city of Boston’s website and other local cities/towns
 - Develop and distribute an on-going newsletter to highlight events

Theme 4: Need for Capital Improvements on On-going Maintenance

The majority of meeting participants acknowledged the need for major capital improvements to the Strand’s building. A summary of their suggestions is presented below:

- Define a mechanism/plan for getting improvements done more quickly
- The “basics” should be completed immediately (e.g. cleanliness and safety issues)
- Establish an accountability structure to ensure that capital improvements are completed in a timely fashion
- Clarify the relationship between the city and the new management with regards to capital improvement and on-going maintenance

Theme 5: Vision for the New Management

Many participants expressed a need for a strong and competent management team in order to revive the Strand. Specific suggestions for the new management included:

- Competent and professional
- Easy to do business with: producer- and client-friendly
- Good relationship between: 1) the management and the community and 2) the management and the city will be important
- Fiscally responsible and accountable management

Theme 6: Community Concerns

Community residents shared the following concerns during the meeting:

- What will the city of Boston’s long-term commitment be to restoring and maintaining the Strand?
- What will the level of community involvement be after the changes are implemented?
- What is the process for acknowledging receipt of ideas from the community (e.g. acknowledge receipt of e-mails, feedback on what has been incorporated into the vision and the RFP process following focus groups and community meeting, etc.)?

- Area safety is an issue affecting the Strand; creative and long-term parking/transportation solutions are needed for the theater and the community (extending the silver line, guaranteeing ridership to the MBTA, etc.)

3. Community Priorities

Meeting participants highlighted the following as priorities:

- Cleanliness and building safety issues
- Computerized box office, good sound system
- Youth and education programming
- The Strand's relationship with the community
- The Strand's relationship with the city
- Changing the perception of the old Strand Theatre
- Transportation and safety issues